



The Insider

www.senate.mi.gov/switalski

Inside State Politics with State Senator Mickey Switalski Senate District 10

May 27, 2005

Welcome to the electronic version of *The Insider*. I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for your support and giving me an opportunity to represent you in the Michigan Senate. It is my sincere hope that this bi-weekly e-newsletter will keep you informed of the happenings in Lansing while staying true to the traditional style of *The Insider*. If you would like to contact me, please feel free to e-mail me at senmswitalski@senate.michigan.gov or call me at my Roseville or Lansing office. You can also meet me in person during my constituent hours, coming to a library near you. Call my office and make an appointment or just walk in. See schedule for details.

Mickey's Letter Bag: Video Games

Dear Senator Switalski,

I commend Lansing on attempting to legislate 'Goodness'. But why can't the parents raise their own children to know what is appropriate? When we were raising our children, all of their TV watching and gaming was monitored by a parent.

Thank you,
Delphine Kowalski
Sterling Heights

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Dear Senator:

This is in response to the violent games kids play on computers. I read your discourse with your staff and my opinion is such stop selling the games to the youngsters themselves, and allow the parents to do the buying should they wish to.... no constitutional conflict, as the parents are making the decision.....regarding the retailers... if they sell to minors and are caught doing so, fine them with increasing amounts each time. If they persist, after a bit, hit them with a very large fine and finally after a certain number of violations, some jail time.... increments of \$500.00 until they reach \$2500.00 dollars and then jail... that we make money for the state, no crowding, and possibly they will see its not worth the hassle for a few bucks earned. The only problem I see is how we would police the problem

Grace Dodt
Clinton Township

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Dear Senator Switalski:

Hello. I would like to comment on the proposed bills that regulate violent or sexually explicit video games to kids under 17. I personally don't understand what the problem is here. Don't we already do this? With movies?

People have to abide (or are supposed to) by the ratings assigned to a particular movie in order to see it. A child under 13 can not go to a theatre and see a movie listed as PG-13 without a parent or guardian. A child under 17 can not be admitted to a rated R movie without a parent or guardian and no one under 17, with or without a parent or guardian, can be admitted to a movie rated NC-17.

Why is it such a big deal that they now want to do this with video games. I have played some video games that have content that surprised me and they are games I would not want to hear that my nieces or nephews are playing. Yes, parents should have the right to say what they want their children to be exposed to. If they want their children to play sexually explicit video games at a very young age, well then go to the store and buy it for them.

If parents want their children to play violent video games, then go to the store and buy it for them. But let's not have them wonder where they went wrong down the line when their children are obsessed with sex or with violence and they see no problem with it. Well, it is because they were exposed at such a young age and that is what they know. Control is key and if the parent has no control, then who is to blame? This is only a small part of a big problem, but we have to start somewhere.

Kelly Senese
Roseville

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Dear Senator:

I am a teenager who would not be affected by these bills because I am now 17 but I would like to say that I am strongly against establishing an age limit on the sale of video games. I find such regulations to be unreasonable on many levels. I feel that the burden is being wrongly placed on the companies who are simply attempting to make a profit and avoiding those who should really receive the blame. Additionally, the punishment as a result of violating the ban is downright unjust.

When first reviewing these bills, I realized a major flaw that seems to negate the entire necessity for such laws. This flaw begs the question: whose responsibility should it really be to monitor what types of games children are buying and playing? This obligation undoubtedly belongs to a child's parents and not the retailer who is simply attempting to run a business. Why should the retailer be fined and/or jailed for merely trying to make a living? If anything, the parents should be fined for failing to properly supervise their children if they manage to obtain and play a violent video game!

The punishment for violating such a law is far in excess of what is necessary. The intended purpose of these bills seems to be to keep violent video games out of the hands of children and as a result wrongly aims to fine and jail video games retailers. As if that's not horrible enough, the fine is an outrageous \$5,000 as well the possibility of up to a year in prison! This could lead to the unintended consequence of putting video game stores out of business rather than to safeguard children. If the store is to be fined at all for violating such an outrageous law, maybe the fine should be moderated – perhaps fining the store the price of the video game so that it does not make a profit from that sale.

Therefore, as you can see, this isn't an attempt to enable myself to purchase video games, however, it is an attempt to preserve the rights of businesses and keep the job of parenting in the hands of parents.

Sincerely,
Charles Daubenspeck
Roseville

Mickey's Blog: Steroids: The Legislature Strikes Back

Steroids have been an issue that we have discussed before in past issues of the *Insider E-Newsletter*. (For more information, please see the April 15th and the April 29th version of the *Insider E-Newsletter*). It is an issue that has been all over the news lately and Congress is considering numerous measures to stop its use among professional athletes.

In the Michigan legislature, the House passed a series of bills last month that would require school districts to adopt a steroid policy and prohibit the possession of steroids within 1,000 feet of parks and schools.

I wrote that these bills were a good beginning but that they did not go far enough because it did not call for any testing. I strongly considered introducing legislation that would require such testing but had doubts about it. That is, until I read an essay that my twelve year-old son, Liam, wrote for his DARE class. I have enclosed it below:

DARE ESSAY by Liam Switalski

There are lots of reasons that I will not use drugs. Drugs are very harmful to your mind and body. That is why many are illegal. Abusing drugs such as marijuana, cocaine and other illegal drugs makes a person incompetent and unable to control themselves. Abusing even legal drugs such as alcohol will affect your judgment. If you drink and drive you are likely to get in an accident harming yourself and people around you.

It is hard to resist using drugs because your friends may pressure you. You do not want to be the odd one out. Advertising of drugs also tempts us. If you go into a corner store to buy a candy bar chances are you will see advertisements for drugs like alcohol and cigarettes. In these advertisements they show popular people using the drugs and make drinking and smoking seem fun and cool. But using the popular people for drugs is a double standard. Most beer companies do not allow the people who promote beer to drink it while working for them for fear that they will embarrass themselves and the company!

To resist drugs it is best to avoid a bad situation before you are in one. Do this by choosing good friends who will not do drugs or pressure you to do them.

I enjoyed the DARE teacher this year-Officer Pfeifer. He was a good teacher. He shocked me and made me think outside the box. He surprised me but helped me prepare by informing me about the dangers of drugs. I will always remember his movie that showed a blender with all drugs like cigarettes and alcohol and cigars mixed up. They looked disgusting and made me think that I would not want that sticking to my heart and lungs!

The type of drug we did not discuss in DARE class was steroids. That is the drug that I would be most tempted to use because I love basketball and I want to be as good as I can. I think that it would be unfair if I played against people twice the size of me who got to be that big from using steroids. Steroids make your muscles bigger and stronger but the bad effect is that your liver stops working and you eventually can die from using them. Baseball players like Mark McGuire and Barry Bonds have recently admitted to using steroids. Both at one time held the record for the most home runs in a season. They did not

achieve this fairly because they had a huge unfair advantage over players who did not abuse their bodies with steroids but were still good baseball players. Even high school and collegiate athletes are tempted to use steroids by their coaches. If I use steroids and win the state championship I would not be satisfied knowing that I cheated. I would not want to play for a coach who wanted his players to use steroids.

I love basketball. Carmello Anthony is a great player-he can score from the inside and the outside. He can play defense. He is one of the best players on the Denver Nuggets team. But even though he is a great player, I do not admire him because he was found with marijuana in his backpack. He is a great basketball player but a bad role model.

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After reading Liam's essay, I reconsidered my position. I went ahead and introduced Senate Bill 500 on May 17. The bill would require random steroid testing of student athletes that participate in high school statewide tournaments, such as the football playoffs or district track meets.

The bill also established penalties for violators. A first offense would result in the suspension of a student athlete from participating in high school sports for 180 school days. A second offense would result in a suspension from athletic participation for 360 school days with a third offense resulting in a student athlete being permanently ineligible to participate in high school sports. Senate Bill 500 also contains provisions that would allow for shorter suspensions if a student completes substance abuse counseling for the first and second offense.

Another problem is the question of how to pay for testing. It is too expensive and too excessive to test everyone. But I think random testing would serve the purpose of being an effective deterrent in preventing high school athletes from using illegal steroids and putting their health in danger. It would also preserve the fairness of athletic competition. To pay for the random testing, Senate Bill 500 calls for a \$1 surcharge on general admission for state tournament events.

Some of the other major issues with random drug testing are ensuring that it is an accurate test, avoiding false positives, maintaining privacy rights, and the issue of certain steroids used to address legitimate medical problems such as asthma. I will work to ensure that the legislation takes careful consideration of these critical issues.

Senate Bill 500 is currently in the Senate Education Committee where it awaits further consideration. The legislation deserves a fair hearing and a chance for the legislative process to work to help resolve some of the issues presented above. Ignoring the problem and doing nothing will not solve the problem.

Consumer Alert: Phone Scams

The Office of Financial and Insurance Services issued a consumer alert this week warning Michigan residents about a phone scam that has targeted many Michigan residents. Consumers are being contacted by phone and are being told that they have won a lottery sweepstakes and will receive a huge cash prize if they send a deposit of \$4,000. The person making the call then states the deposit is to ensure the safe delivery of the check and would be refunded to the winner.

The Office of Financial and Insurance Services is warning residents not to send the money. Chances are that if it sounds too good to be true, then it probably is and that residents must usually have to enter a contest in order to win.

For more information, please log on to <http://www.michigan.gov/cis/0,1607,7-154-10555-118938--.00.html>. The Attorney General's website (<http://www.michigan.gov/ag/>) also provides numerous resources and information for citizens to use to prevent being victimized by identity theft or other scams.

Mickey's TV Insider Show

Check out my TV Insider Show coming to a television station near you. Watch me interview local guests about politics, life, issues and concerns to our district.

Sterling Heights

Every Saturday and Sunday at 12:30 p.m.
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

Utica

Every Wednesday at 9 a.m.
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

Clinton Township

Last week of every month- Sat thru Thurs
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

Roseville

Various Times
(Comcast Channel 18)

*Please note that Sterling Heights/Utica/Clinton Township will show the TV Insider Show on Comcast Channel 5 and Wide Open West Channel 10. Clinton Township will air the TV Insider Show at various times during the last week of every month. Roseville can see the TV Insider Show on Comcast Channel 18.

Coffee Hours

*Please note that since the District Office is in Roseville, I do not have set coffee hours in Roseville. However, I encourage you to visit the Roseville office. We even have a coffee pot. Everyone is welcome to attend the coffee hours and discuss their issues and concerns.

June 6
7-9 p.m.

Location: Sterling Heights Public Library
(40255 Dodge Park)
Sterling Heights

June 27
7-9 p.m.

Location: Clinton-Macomb Public Library
(35891 South Gratiot, north of 15 Mile)
Clinton Township

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